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Globalizing Justice: The Ethics of Poverty and Power. By Richard W. Miller. Oxford: Oxford University Press. 2010. 341pp. Index. £55.00. ISBN 978 0 19 958198 6.

The best parts of Richard W. Miller's book, *Globalizing Justice*, reflect unique virtues of his work, while the weakest aspects of it result from its basis in an approach to questions of global justice shared by many political theorists. This combination makes it both an important and a frustrating book.

International political theory, as a field, is inherently interdisciplinary and Miller's book is a crossover firmly rooted in liberal political philosophy, but continues to explore the questions of global justice opened up in pioneering works by Charles Beitz and Thomas Pogge. Where Miller distinguishes himself is in his political analysis. Authors writing from within political philosophy but addressing international politics are often rightly accused of insufficient or naive political analysis. Miller's work avoids that criticism; his examination of global poverty, international trade, global warming and American hegemony are well informed, critical and clearly presented. The depth of his engagement sets a new standard for combining rigorous work in applied ethics with a detailed analysis of world politics, which all those working in international political theory will be hard pressed to meet. Yet, something about the overall work is unsatisfying.

Where the book fails is in its defence of universal moral principles intended to set the ground rules for a more just international politics. Miller avoids a direct appeal to cosmopolitan principles that place demanding responsibilities upon individuals to help distant others, instead deriving his "quasi-cosmopolitan" perspective from a less demanding duty of sympathy, combined with a more specific duty of powerful states, and their citizens, to repair the negative effects of their past injustices.

The duty of sympathy that Miller defends suggests that we have duties to help the poor, but not at great risk or costs to ourselves and those closest to us – he does this by suggesting that equal moral respect is different from equal moral responsibility. This line of reasoning is then used to justify a greater a priori duty to assist poor compatriots, rather than the poor living outside one's national borders. It is the participation in a shared political life that justifies these stronger commitments, but this privileging of compatriots is importantly not a communitarian one. It is based, instead, on the consequence of sharing political membership, such that we have a greater responsibility for the domestic poor because we have a greater role in causing and perpetuating their poverty – and also a greater ability to remedy it – through our shared political institutions.

This is an important claim because it provides the basis for Miller's quasi-cosmopolitanism. The rest of the book is dedicated to showing that across a number of aspects of international politics, powerful developed states (most notably the US) have had, and continue to have, a negative effect on the lives of the poor in developing countries. Miller's political analysis is vital to his overall argument for a commitment to global justice, which he describes as a project for global social democracy, because the duties of powerful developed states to change their behaviour and make amends for past wrongs depend upon his claim that they negatively effect the political life of those living in developing countries.

Where this project fails to convince is in articulating strong moral duties, which would require radical changes in the behaviour of powerful states, on fairly flimsy rationalist grounds. The project is partially supported by a commitment to equal moral respect, which is defended as commonsense or obvious to any rational person, but this is not only unconvincing (plenty of people find the proposition to be anything but commonsense) but abstract to a degree that risks meaninglessness. Where the commitment to equal moral respect is specified it takes on familiar liberal dimensions – respecting the autonomy of individuals as rational actors appears to be key. While Miller makes interesting innovations in liberal political ethics, namely suggesting that Rawls’ ‘Veil of Ignorance’ is better suited to considering specific questions of what allocation of responsibility a neutral participant would choose in responding to global poverty or moderating greenhouse gases, but he fails to address the many criticisms of this approach to discovering the moral foundations that support the grander edifice he constructs.

While this approach reduces the need to justify strong a priori responsibilities (he is at pains in the early chapters to emphasize the limited requirements of his principle of sympathy in comparison to other accounts, notably that of Peter Singer), it creates a tension that undermines the overall project. By basing one’s moral duties to the global poor on the specific harmful consequences that citizens of powerful states are implicated in, Miller makes the primary determinant of one’s level of responsibility the cumulative effective of institutions and structures. This means that the effects of the globalization of the economy, the institutionalised structure of international trade, contemporary patterns of production and consumption, and the hegemony of the US enable the harms that beset the global poor. Yet, these harms are attributed to the actions of individuals and the solution to these massive problems is to implore powerful actors to behave in accordance with rational moral standards. If the powerful actors most able to influence these institutions and structures are unmoved by these responsibilities, then the citizens of developed nations are expected not only to exert electoral and persuasive power over these social forces but to do so with a sense of responsibility to the global poor.

In the end, Miller’s project is either secretly cynical or hopelessly naive in its optimism, since suggesting that the mass of citizens in developed countries will be willing to bear the costs of achieving justice and able to force powerful individuals to behave morally seems a rather impossible task. The task is made even more impossible by the absence of any structural critique, essentially ignoring the role that established institutions and practices have in enabling the injustices done to the world’s most vulnerable people. According to the logic of his argument, meeting the needs of the global poor, reforming the international trade regime, addressing global warming and undermining the threat of American empire require moral conversion rather than political change – where a political programme is advised it consists in a “social movement” focused on changing the attitudes of the powerful. Despite the many virtues of the book, Miller is undone by the old liberal belief that the moral truth is politically powerful – which is tragic, because his excellent analysis actually provides the seeds of a more critical and politically insightful approach to global justice.